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RAINBOW LORIKEETS (*TRICHOGLOSSUS HAEMATODUS*) RELEASED ON ROTTNESST ISLAND IN 1960

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Rainbow Lorikeets have been established in Perth for at least 20 years. Storr (1973) observed a pair in 1968 and commented that they could have "reached Perth unaided . . . and not be escapees from captivity". However, Storr long ago gave up that view (pers. comm.). Forshaw (1981) commented on Storr's published view that they "reached Perth unaided" with the following "I cannot accept this proposition because the pattern of slow spread from a central point, where virtually all early observations were made, denotes establishment of aviary escapees, the most likely means of introduction".

Since 1968 Rainbow Lorikeets have often been reported within a triangle with apices at Mosman Park, Scarborough and South Perth. A possible source of this population could have been escapees from Rottnest. Permission to release Rainbow Lorikeets and Cockatiels (*Nymphicus hollandicus*) on Rottnest was sought in December 1960 by D.J. Sullivan, Rottnest Island Board Manager (APB File, Fauna on Rottnest Island, 1960). The request was considered by a special committee of members of the Agriculture Protection Board and the Fauna Protection Advisory Committee. That committee "was not prepared to make a favourable recommendation that any fauna non-indigenous to Rottnest should be released on the island" (ibid).

Although the deliberate release was not sanctioned, an accidental release did occur. It was reported that "some species of birds alien to Rottnest had been seen moving about the settlement. The birds included unidentified green parrots which were observed on feeding platforms in the tuart trees around Garden Lake. Budgerigars (*Melopsittacus undulatus*) and Cockatiels were observed flying freely in the Moreton Bay fig trees in the settlement area. A report had been received from W.A. Farmer that a flock of Blue Mountain Lorikeets (Rainbow Lorikeets) had been at liberty on the island for some months and had survived the winter" (APB File, Vermin Control & Fauna Conservation Co-ordinating Committee, 1961). After questioning, Sullivan advised that "six or seven Rainbow Lorikeets had escaped from a cage which was overturned in a gale at the hotel about thirteen months ago" (ibid).

Rainbow Lorikeets, Budgerigars and Cockatiels are not recorded in "Birds of Rottnest Island — a checklist" compiled by D.A. Saunders et al. (1981). However, it would have been possible for the escaped Rainbow Lorikeets to survive for a short time on Rottnest before flying and establishing on the mainland.

An eight year gap from the time of release on Rottnest Island to the first record in Wembley adds an interesting question to the hypothesis: where were the Rainbow Lorikeets in that period? One record mid-way through the time lapse was made approximately 130 kms south of Perth; Sedgwick (1973) recorded at least two birds at Harvey in 1964. Forshaw (1981) noted that single birds and pairs were sighted in the Perth metropolitan area, at infrequent intervals during the early 1960's. Are there other records from 1960 to 1968 that could add information to this Rainbow Lorikeet establishment question?

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